

MYSTERY OF THE OREGON PRAIRIE MASSACRE

REAL WEST



35c

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION
SEPTEMBER

**SAGA
OF CHIEF
WASHAKIE**

**ADELINE
DALTON,
OUTLAW
MOTHER**

**THE TRAGIC
RIDDLE OF
SUTTER'S
GOLD**

**TEXAS
YANKEES
OF
CAT MOUNTAIN**



CUSTER'S
GREATEST BLUNDER

NORTH

REAL WEST

Vol. VIII
Number 43
Sept. 1965



The Brand of Quality

Editor: Philip R. Rand
Managing Editor: William T. Kish
Executive Editor: Pat Masulli

Research Director: Edward T. LeBlanc
Art Director: Bohdan Dziubina
Production Manager: William Anderson

IN THIS ISSUE

Miners brawl, Indians attack and outlaws ride again through the exciting pages of this month's Real West. You'll wonder at the patience and suffering of Adeline Dalton, outlaws' mother who sweated as only a mother can to raise her 15 children properly. Your desire for riches will diminish when you read the tragedy of John Sutter, and you'll thrill to the Miracle of Josiah Wilbarger who was shot, scalped and left for dead by fierce Comanches only to be saved by a woman who was already dead. Each issue of Real West brings you the fantastic adventures of people who made the old West our most exciting period of history. Every story is factual, the places and events are real, the pictures authentic. Only the look of Real West changes from time to time as we try to improve its appearance for our readers. We welcome all comments and suggestions that will help us give you what you want. But one thing we won't change, and that is, we won't print fiction. So, climb up, and let's gallop back into the past for the adventure and romance of the Real West!



THIS MONTH'S COVER

Artist Earl Norem has captured the movement of a swift Cavalry charge as troopers of the 7th Cavalry bear down on a Sioux encampment. For the interesting tie-in story, see "Custer's Greatest Blunder" in this issue.

DOUBLE LENGTH FEATURE

Death to the Apaches..... 42
by J.P. Dunn Jr.

TRUE REAL WEST ADVENTURES

Adeline Dalton, Outlaw Mother..... 10
by Harold Preece

Mystery of the Oregon Prairie Massacre..... 15
by Anne Weatherford

Those Crazy Desert Canaries..... 19
by Bob Jan

Saga of Chief Washakie..... 22
by Helen Clark

Custer's Greatest Blunder..... 26
by John Frederick Forman

Indian Corn Dance..... 32
by Earl Kulicek

Ghosts of Tonopah..... 35
by Kal Stevens

Socorro's Hole Full of Treasure..... 40
by Andy Gregg

Miracle of Josiah Wilbarger..... 51
by Louise Cheney Auer

The Tragic Riddle of Sutter's Gold..... 54
by Bob Young

Bull Doggin' Females..... 60
by Lee Ryland

Texas Yankees of Cat Mountain..... 62
by Harold Preece

SPECIAL FEATURES

Grey Raiders at Red Bluff..... 7
Ben Thompson - Gunman's Gunman..... 34

DEPARTMENTS

Editor's Corral..... 5
Ask Your Questions..... 6
Mail Roundup..... 8
The American Indian..... 71

Real West published bimonthly by CHARLTON PUBLICATIONS, INC., Division St., Derby, Connecticut. Vol. 8, No. 43, Sept., 1965. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Derby, Connecticut. Second Class Postage Paid at Derby, Conn. Copyright 1965. All rights reserved. Executive offices and office of publication Division St., Derby, Connecticut. Price 35¢ per copy, subscription \$1.75 per year. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts and photos. All material must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Printed in the U.S.A.

Advertising Representatives: George T. Franco, 529 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017; William R. Stewart, 1085 Walnut St., Des Plaines, Ill.; Murray Bothwell, 234 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena, Calif.; Daniel L. Scali, 66 Cushing Ave., Belmont, Mass.

TEXAS YANKEES OF CAT MOUNTAIN

Fighting under the very shadow of a confederate state capitol, the Texas Mountain Eagles were unequalled in gall and guts.

by Harold Preece

Texas seceded from the Union, in a dubious election, on February 1, 1861. Before sundown, that same day, Bull Creek seceded from the Confederacy.

You won't find it written in any history books, since a book counted for less than a good saddle back there where I was born. But my big connection boasts that the first shots in defense of the Union were fired, not at Fort Sumter on the pleasant Carolina coast, but at Bull Creek in the harsh Texas hills.

Now, nobody has ever maintained that the Battle of Bull Creek was a major one. Neither has anybody ever denied that it was a decisive little scrap, setting the pattern that the Texas hill country would follow through two years of ceaseless guerrilla warfare.

The fight began casually enough. A squad of Secesh enlistment officers, flushed with good bourbon and electoral victory, rode out to recruit mountain cowboys for the confederate cavalry. Maybe it was the bourbon that made them somewhat less than vigilant in admittedly hostile territory. But the invaders got no farther than the guns allowed. That off-limit for graybacks was the log cabin of my great-grandfather, Uncle Will Preece, who had moved southwest to Texas when Cousin Tom Lincoln had moved northwest to Indiana.

Ten-year-old Franklin Pierce Preece spotted the visitors from his lookout post in a chinaberry tree. His carbine not only signaled a warning to the clan, but clipped the bridle of the top-ranking confederates' pony squarely in two. Twelve-year-old Zachary Taylor Winfield Scott Preece

followed a second later with a neat shot that singed the eyebrows off another Jeff Davis emissary.

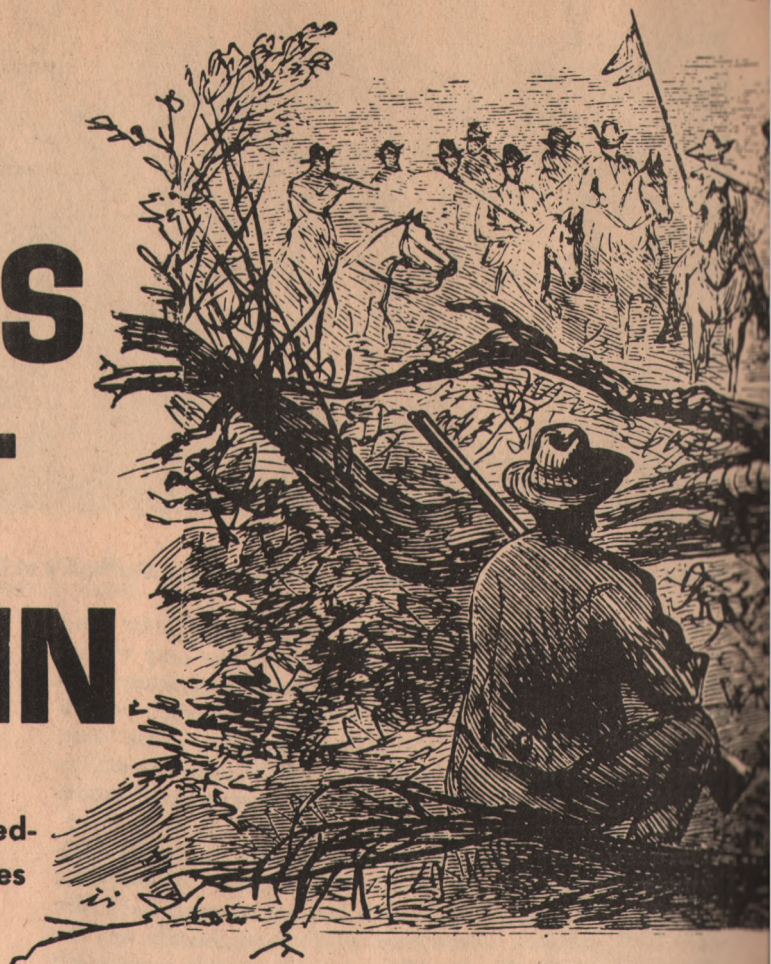
The three older Preece boys -- stocky Wayne Pulaski; six-foot William Martin, Jr., called Little Will to distinguish him from his father; and bantam-sized Richard Lincoln -- dispatched lead from convenient stations behind big rocks. Uncle Will and his half-Cherokee wife, Aunt Lizzie, paid their respects to the new authority as they crouched with their weapons behind a wild rose bush in the front yard.

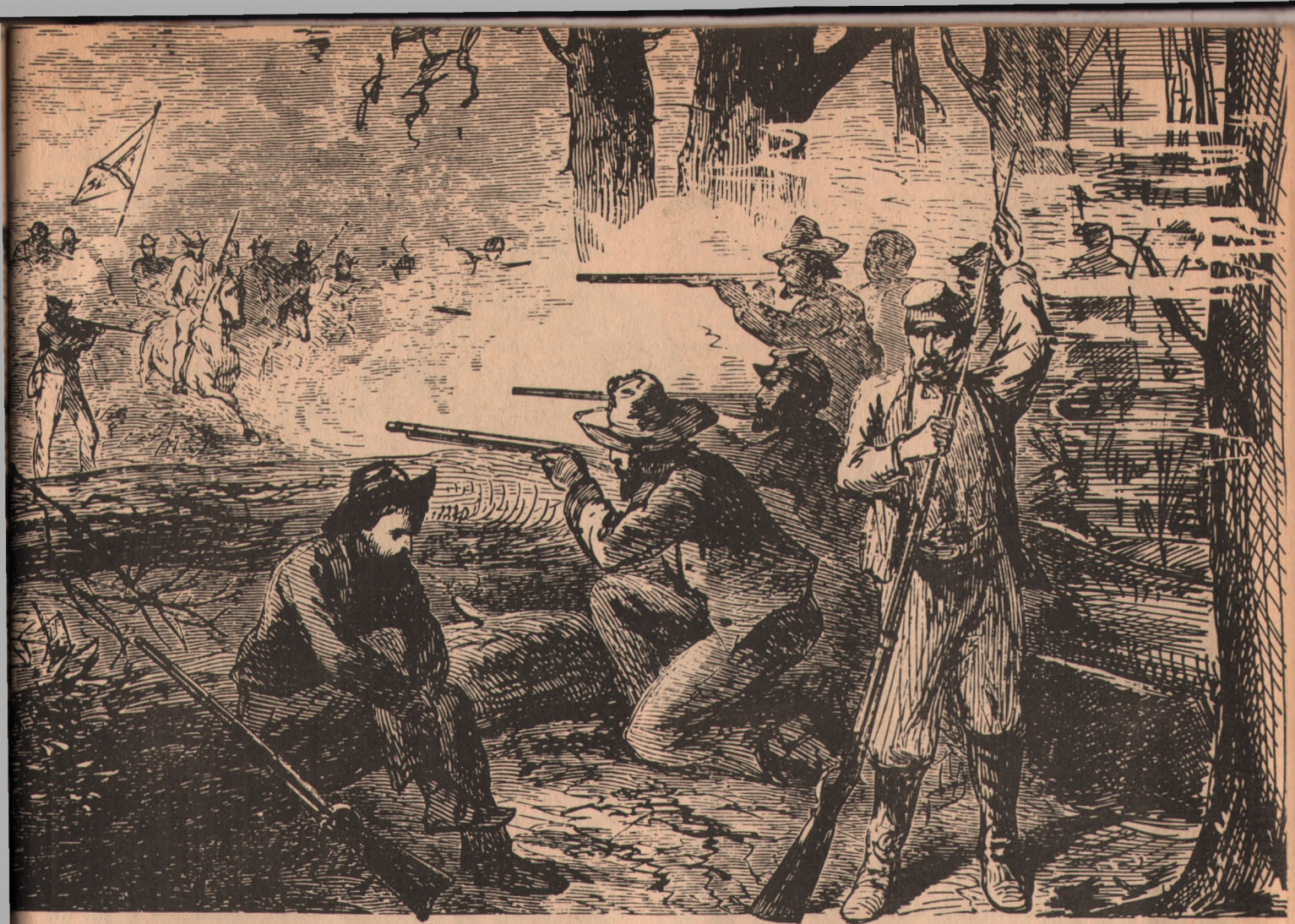
The Secesh spurred their horses toward Austin, the capital, muttering something about "damn treasonable hillbillies who'd have to be hung." Uncle Will fired a farewell shot to speed them along. Then he laid down the old muzzle-loader his grandfather had used to blast redcoats at King's Mountain, and stroked his patriarchal beard thoughtfully.

"Looks like we might be headed for trouble in these hills," he commented in that mild way of his. "Looks like Cousin Tom's boy, Abe, might be needin' a little help. Reckon we better start roundin' up the neighbors."

He called his sons and began giving orders with the crisp precision of a military commander. Frank was told to catch old Trigger, the hound dog. Trigger, the best grapevine telegrapher in the hills, trotted down a cow trail with a note tied around his neck. The kindred mountain clan, which kept its guns loaded at Travis Peak, would know what to do when it received the message.

Late that night, almost every mountain man in handy riding reach assembled at the first fortress of the Union in Texas -- Uncle Will's place on Bull Creek. The old man noticed that but few were absent, and they were that





minority of Secesh sympathizers he could count on the fingers of one gnarled hand.

Voices stopped, lean Scotch-Irish faces were fixed on Uncle Will as he strode from the house toward the men gathered under his tree.

"Friends and kinfolks," Bull Creek's first settler began, "slavery ain't been no manure on our 'tater patches till slavery started jumpin' over its range."

Uncle Will's fingers curved in a sweeping gesture that embraced distances far removed from these peaks and canyons.

"Back there," he spoke with contempt, "back on that side of the Brazos River, Texas is cotton country and slave country." Then his hand pointed to his own familiar hills, and his words were proud.

"But here west of the Brazos, it's cow country, and free men ridin' free pastures. That's how we found it! That's how we're gonna keep it."

His eyes traveled around the circle, measuring each man for warrior or coward. "'Tain't but one way for Bull Creek to aim its guns!" he rasped. "'Cause Bull Creek's still in the United States. That way is Lincoln and the Union - "

Cheers that scared the whippoorwills off their roosts echoed a mile up and down Bull Creek. Men who had fled the competition of slave labor in Georgia or Alabama threw their Stetsons in the air and whooped approval. Some drew their Colts and banged away till Dick bawled:

"Stop wastin' scarce ammunition by shootin' the moon! Step over here, and we'll figger who to shoot at."

That night, on a Texas ranch, the South's first Union guerrilla force was mustered by obscure kinsmen of the southerner whom fate had chosen to lead the free and

democratic North. The Texas Mountain Eagles, that pioneer outfit of Southern loyalists called itself, because the eagle was the emblem of the American republic which its members would not foreswear. It had no uniforms and no titles of rank, but Dick, the ex-Ranger, was its active commander, and Uncle Will, the Methodist elder, its councilor of war.

Other guerrilla groups, springing up later in many other sections of the south have gotten more glory -- maybe because some writer was around while some of their scarred-up old veterans were still surviving. But none ever equalled those Unionists of Texas for sheer gall and guts. For the Mountain Eagles were organized under the very shadow of a confederate state capitol. Before the ink was dry on the Ordinance of Secession, when the Confederacy itself was but a few weeks old, and while Lincoln was still waiting to be inaugurated, the men of Bull Creek were striking the first blows to keep their country one.

They did not wait for a second invasion of their territory, where they tolerated neither slaves nor slavers. Instead, they took the offensive to the very halls of the Secession Convention. They infiltrated into Austin by two's and three's, rifles on their shoulders, six-shooters and bowie knives in their belts. And no confederate dared touch them, for most of Austin's citizens had also voted against separation, even though the town's position as the seat of government made it paradoxically the main headquarters of the Secesh.

Day after day, the Mountain Eagles lounged around the capitol grounds, joined by German Abolitionists, Mexican vaqueros, and other representatives of that vast anti-slavery majority of West Texas. Day after day, Uncle Will and



William Martin Preece and his wife Elizabeth. Sturdy Texans who fought for what they believed in and paid dearly for it as they saw their family and friends shot like quail.

other Union men knocked on the door of Governor Sam Houston, who was steadfastly refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederacy after having been elected on a pro-Union ticket, two years before.

They begged Houston to unify their forces and pledged that, under his command, they would permit no grayback troopers to cross the Brazos. Their hopes mounted high when Lincoln, immediately after his inauguration on March 4, 1861, offered Houston fifty thousand Northern volunteers to hold the Lone Star State.

Acceptance of that offer might have resulted in shortening the Civil War from four years to two. For Texas was the great bread basket of the confederacy — its main source of corn and beef and cotton as well as its ultimate last line of defense. "Take away its feedbag," Uncle Will argued stubbornly with the tired old governor, "and you've already cut out its guts."

"I will not lead one faction of Texans for trigger work on another," replied Sam Houston. On March 16, Texas's founding father surrendered his office to a lieutenant governor whose name is remembered only because an ambitious mouse succeeded a retiring lion.

Dick led his men home. "Sam Houston won't hold Texas," he said grimly to the Eagles. "But we'll hold these hills."

New rifles, that had come in roundabout fashion from a German abolitionist gunsmith in Austin, found their way to the Scotch-Irish mountaineers. Then Dick went into close council with his fellow hillman, Tom Anderson, who was managing to furnish the guerrillas four barrels of powder for every one handed to the Secesh.

Dick had emergency supplies of powder cached in the mountain caves, along with dried beef and blankets that a man might need in a pinch. Rough seats and fireplaces were carved out of the hard clay walls of the caverns. Signals — owl hoots and jaybird calls — were worked out so that the whole section would know whenever Secesh showed up.

Under the supervision of Uncle Will, the guerrillas built, on lofty Dead Man's Peak, a crude rock fortress to serve as their central headquarters. And the Second Battle of

Bull Creek erupted one month before the first battle of Bull Run.

On a hot June afternoon, twenty Mountain Eagles drove back the first detachment of confederate cavalymen passing through to establish Secesh law in the German country farther west. Fifty graybacks stopped to gulp the sulphur water of Martin's Well, reputed to cure anything from cancer to colic. Bull Creek legend has it that the visitors got a reception somewhat more bitter than the water.

Shots blazed from the surrounding cedar brakes as soon as the Secesh lit from their stirrups. The ponies scattered in all directions. Six Eagles galloped out to round up the valuable contraband of horseflesh. Fourteen other mountaineers, led by Dick, spurred their scrubby broncs toward the dismounted confederates.

Gun butts, swung from saddles, cracked against gun butts brandished from the ground. Shot-away revelings from gray uniforms blended with blood and sulphur in a malodorous mess that kept the well contaminated for weeks afterward.

For thirty minutes, Texan fought Texan with cold Texas fury. Then the Secesh broke and ran. Five of them were picked off by mountain snipers along the road before the battered force reached Austin, panting and footsore. Four lay dead by the well. These Uncle Will buried according to the rites of Methodism.

Half a dozen were too badly wounded to join their comrades in flight. Three of those were loaded on horses turned loose at the Austin city limits after nightfall, so that their riders might be found by compatriots.

But the remaining three turned out to be conscript cowboys with no love for the Confederacy. These were patched up with Aunt Lizzie Preece's Injun remedies. Then they were mustered into the Eagles, after swearing allegiance to Lincoln and the Union.

The new governor went into an apoplectic rage when he heard that confederate regulars had been whipped by nondescript hillbillies. Word reached his ears that the guerrillas meant to march on Austin, place themselves at the head of the loyalist townfolk, and overturn the Secesh state

government. Tense and trembling, His Excellency decided to act.

He hanged two Austin citizens suspected of being Union intelligence agents, then put the town under a strict curfew that lasted the length of the war. He recruited a special Ranger company whose instructions were to crush the counter-rebellion now spreading from Bull Creek across that whole five-hundred-mile stretch of the Texas hills.

By one of history's grim jokes, the man who commanded the punitive expedition hailed from Springfield, Illinois, now Abe Lincoln's home town. He had hated Lincoln in the Illinois capital. He had liked the rail splitter's kin even less when he had met them in the Texas capital. Rob Morris was his name. And that name is remembered in the hills as a symbol of infamy along with the name of his chief lieutenant, Charlie Clapp, who deserted the Eagles to turn informer.

Side by side, they rode together – Morris, the fanatic, and Clapp, the finger man. Behind them swaggered their company, brand burners and horse thieves too cowardly to enlist in the courageous confederate army, far outnumbering the small minority of decent men in the command. It was Clapp who led the way to the homes of Union men. It was his colleague, Morris, who ordered the ruffraff to hang or shoot loyalists in the presence of their families. Other settlers were potted casually like quail as they tended their corn patches.

Young men, fingered by Clapp, were tied with ropes to their saddles, taken to Austin, and impressed into the confederate army. One of those who fell into the informer's net was Little Will Preece, who rose to be a second lieutenant in the southern army while biding his time and keeping his mouth shut. The Mountain Eagles marked Clapp as Number One on their list of candidates for future execution. But one other Secesh had his name taken off death's roster for an act of mercy all too rare in those days.

On a blistering August day, a squad of Morris's buckies, commanded by a youthful lieutenant of the confederate regulars, rode up to Uncle Will's cabin. Only one Preece male was in sight, and that was the urchin, Frank.

The young lieutenant paled when the squad sergeant lassoed the boy by his neck and dragged him toward a pecan tree with Frank's mother and sisters pleading for his life.

The sergeant threw the free end of the rope across a limb. "You got your choice, young-un," this Secesh growled. "Tell where your dad and brothers are – or we pull this rope and you do a jig on air."

Frank sniffed like any little boy in trouble but said nothing. "Yank the rope," the sergeant commanded a man. The lad was exactly one inch above ground when the young lieutenant's hand darted to his belt. A second later, his gun was trained on his own startled command.

"That'll be enough!" he snapped. "Untie the boy. I'll shoot the first man who goes any further with this."

The lieutenant turned and lifted his hat in a gracious bow to Aunt Lizzie. "Your pardon, ma'am," he apologized in a drawl that hinted of Virginia. "I have no warrant to make war on children. Good day, ma'am, March, men!"

Bigger and bigger Secesh units poured into the hills as the southern armies won easily from Virginia to Texas, that first year of the Civil War. Disaster befell the Mountain Eagles when Clapp ferreted out their secret ammunition dumps in the caves. Confederate ordnance inspectors were stationed in Tom Anderson's grist mill, which now made powder. And he could manage to slip only a little now and then by muleback to his neighbors, holed up and immobilized, on Dead Man's Peak.

On New Year's Day, 1862, the Eagles held a gloomy council in their stronghold. Only forty of that original hundred and ten mountain partisans had escaped hanging, shooting, or conscription. No man there had seen his family in weeks. Morris's men had the country so tightly patrolled that mountain women could no longer slip up the steep trails with baskets of corn and dried beef for their men in the citadel. With ammunition too low for game shooting, the guerrillas' daily dish was a rabbit caught in a deadfall or a couple of ground squirrels dug out of their holes.

"What I wouldn't give for a nice cup of steamin' hot

The Preece family at a more peaceful time when the men didn't have to carry arms constantly for protection.



coffee," sighed a lanky mountaineer who sat warming his hands by a sparse brush fire. "Next best thing to seein' my Nancy."

"Tain't no use in goin' on," grumbled another. "We're hundreds of miles from any Union force, and I reckon Abe Lincoln don't know about us. Reckon he don't even give a damn."

Dick frowned hard. "We'll make Abe Lincoln know about us," he said quietly. "He'll have to know because we don't let Jeff Davis forget us."

The debate was interrupted by a sentinel standing lookout on the mountain's highest point. Every guerrilla jumped to his feet. But Dick noticed that some picked up their guns half-heartedly.

"It's Morris's Secesh!" he said. "They figure they've starved us out, so now they can wipe us out. But just remember this. If we give in, we die on the rope for resistin' the confederacy. But if it's death we're facin', let's die like men and not like hoss thieves."

When Dick looked down, he saw that the Secesh had scaled almost to the top of the peak before they had been sighted by the tired, hungry sentry. As his eyes glimpsed a group of men creeping around boulders, he recognized characters whom he had run down and jailed as a Texas Ranger. Now by the turn of fate, they were wearing Ranger badges and hunting him.

He restrained men who wanted to open immediate fire. "They're sendin' their most worthless ones up first to make us waste all our powder right off," he cautioned. "Just hold your fire, and make that bloody son of a gun, Rob Morris, think we ain't got guts to fight."

A tense thirty minutes passed, with the enemy advance guard below still playing hide and seek but drawing not a bullet from the defenders above. A more cautious attacker would have sensed a trap. But Rob Morris was anxious to earn the confederate colonelcy that had been promised him as soon as he delivered a final coup to the mountain guerrillas.

Carefully, Morris began leading his entire force up those trails originally beaten out by the Comanches. Dick estimated that his foes numbered a hundred men -- half of them special Rangers and half of them Secesh Regulars.

The Secesh were cocky and sure as they kept climbing with no show of resistance. Some paused to thumb their noses at their unseen opponents on the peak before readying their guns. Fifteen feet from the summit, Morris, flanked by Clapp, stopped and bawled an ultimatum:

"All right, you bastards, throw your guns down to us. Then come down yourselves -- hands up!"

The continued silence would have been a warning to a wiser man. Twelve feet from the top, and the Secesh fired a preliminary volley which inflicted no damage on certain ancient trees that were half dead anyhow. But in another two feet and another two minutes, the mountain men gave their answer.

Their blast sent a dozen of the enemy, dead or wounded, down the steep sides of the great hill. The Secesh fell back from the sudden fire above. Then the guerrillas were scrambling down the peak with the sureness of mountain goats.

They fell upon their foes, largely drawn from the Texas prairies where men need not learn toeholds to grasp the earth. They grabbed rifles from Secesh, then turned the enemy's weapons on the enemy. They drew bowie knives for close-in fighting as prairie men backed against rocks and trees to keep their balance before the onslaught of mountain men.

Ascent had been painful for the plainsmen. Descent was

"hell on a hill," as Uncle Jude Lockhart, recalled it. Four stumbled, vainly clutching stubby weeds to break their fall, for every one able to stand up and fight. Bull Creek tradition varies on the casualty figure for each side, and Morris's official report of the battle was probably destroyed by the fire that burned the old Texas capitol in 1881.

Uncle Jude, who, as a boy, witnessed the fight from the bottom of the hill, swears that thirty Secesh died and only three mountain men. Half that number for the confederates and double that figure for the Eagles would probably be a less biased estimate. But all legends agree that, in less than an hour, the surviving Secesh were galloping out of the hills -- Morris and Clapp in the van.

That was Bull Creek's last sizable invasion from those trying to drag it like an unwilling bronc into a strange corral. The Eagles now managed to be with their families by day. But taking no chances, they spread their blankets together in different places of rendezvous by night. They kept their guns loaded to potshot stray confederate conscription patrols, with Tom Anderson once more providing plenty of powder and grayback ordnance inspectors conspicuous by their absence.

Rob Morris let hillmen be, and began the safer business of fighting Comanches. Clapp, the informer, took shivering refuge in the state capitol at Austin. There treachery was rewarded meanly with a little job polishing spittoons for confederate officers. Right after Lee's surrender at Appomattox, a mountain man's bullet evened scores with the turncoat. Some say yet that the executioner was one of Abe Lincoln's Bull Creek kin.

By 1863, virtually all confederate authority had collapsed west of Austin. The German counties had defiantly elected Union men to fill their public offices. Immediately, the new officials used their authority to arrest the hated conscription squads on charges of "disturbing the peace" and molesting the inhabitants.

In those counties also, their sprang up "war relief societies" that were actually semi-military units. Those outfits were led, in a fitting sequel of history, by scholarly German immigrants who had fought in the unsuccessful German democratic revolution of 1848.

For, everywhere, the tide was turning against Jeff Davis's ephemeral empire of slavery. Defeat plagued it on the battle front, and civil unrest wracked it on the home front.

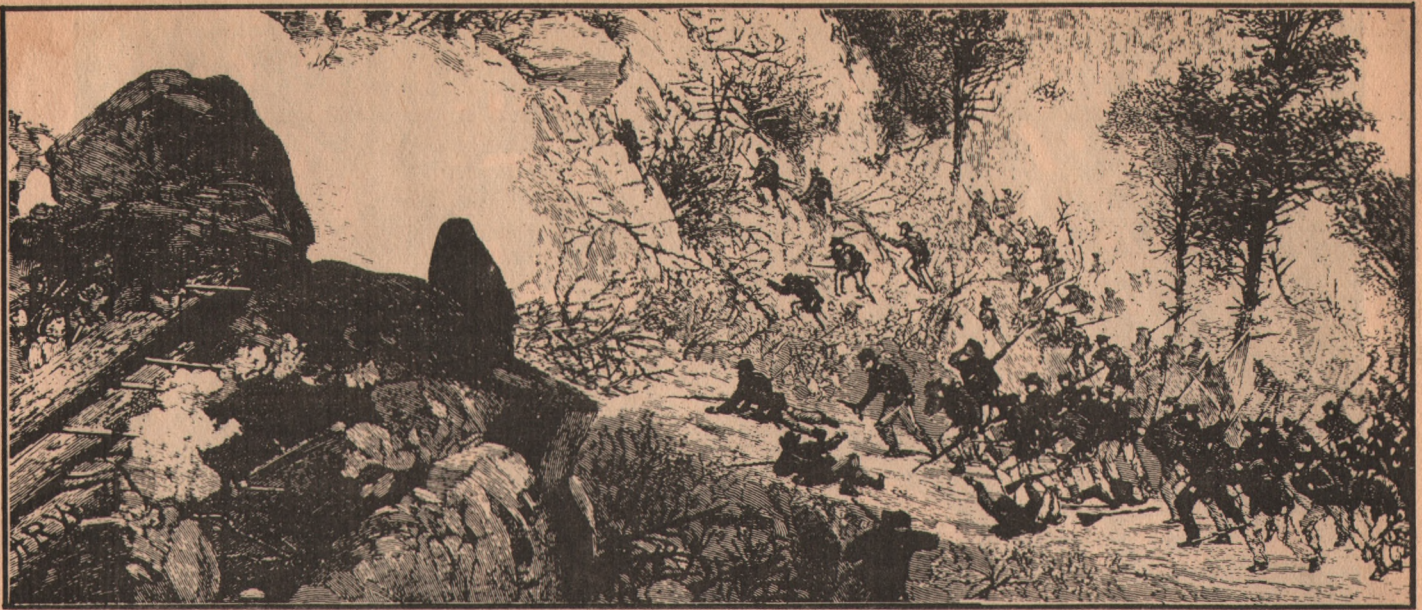
War-weary communities from the Potomac to the Mississippi were resisting, with shots and sabotage, confederate commissary details bent on seizing their crops and livestock. Whole outfits were deserting en masse with their guns and equipment to Abe Lincoln's armies.

One of those who persuaded a command to reverse gun-sights was Little Will, more comfortable in the blue uniform of a Federal lieutenant than in the gray garb of a confederate shavetail. But he disguised himself in ordinary cowboy clothes when he slipped home on a furlough, bringing along a welcome guest.

Uncle Will embraced his son, then seized his visitor by both hands. Everybody in the hills knew Colonel Andrew Jackson Hamilton, who had been congressman from Texas' big western half till the time of secession. While Bull Creek had been performing its first act of resistance, Hamilton had been fulfilling his last official act as its representative by serving as one of the managers of Lincoln's inaugural ball.

"Colonel Jack!" Uncle Will exclaimed. "What's the news? What's Cousin Abe doin' in Washington?"

"Doing as well as you are on Bull Creek," Hamilton laughed. "But maybe, having a little more to do with."



More troops poured into the mountains and were met with blistering sniper fire from the desperate Eagles.

Dick eased forward. "Does Abe know about us?" He asked anxiously. "Has he heard about how we been holdin' out down here?"

Hamilton put a comradely arm around Dick. "He knows about his kinspeople away off in Texas, son, and he's mighty proud of 'em. He knows about the Mountain Eagles too. And he's got a bigger job for them to do."

Dick's tight face hid his feelings when he learned that he was known to that famous relative he had seen only on a picture. The former Ranger was impatient to hear what other task Abe might have for the Eagles. But he waited deferentially for his guest to speak further.

Colonel Hamilton eased himself into a chair with a pantherhide bottom. "I've been appointed by President Lincoln as military governor of Texas -- even if," he added laughingly, "I can't move into the capital just now. My first assignment is to mobilize all the Texas Union guerrilla companies into a Federal cavalry troop to go to Louisiana and wrest the Mississippi from confederate control. I've already arranged for you to be enrolled as a sharpshooter with rank of sergeant."

The sergeant-to-be beamed with pride. "I thank you, Colonel Jack. We'll all be right happy to be regular troopers of our country. But who'll hold the hills after we leave?"

"Those left behind," Jack Hamilton answered gravely. "The old folks and the women and the children. They'll find ways of carrying on that even you never thought about. Armies can whip armies. But no army can ever whip the people. You've proved it right here on Bull Creek."

Two days later, the Mountain Eagles started in little bunches toward the Mexican border, more than three hundred miles away. Larger groups might attract too much attention from the massed Confederate Rangers they would have to dodge when they neared the international boundary. Once they reach the Rio Grande River, they would slip across to the Mexican city of Matamoros, where Federal steamers would transport them to New Orleans, now in Union hands. There they would be inducted into the First Texas Cavalry of the United States Army. And that larger outfit's campaign on the Mississippi would help pave the way for Grant's capture of Vicksburg that cut the Confederacy into two disconnected halves.

The day was pleasant and prospects were bright when

Dick, Wayne, and Little Will set out from Bull Creek with Uncle Will. For, at sixty-three, the patriarch had insisted on accompanying his boys to the Louisiana front.

"Maybe they won't let me use a gun at my age," he said, "but I can cook and help around camp."

It was friendly country they rode through, though Secesh Ranger patrols gave them a few stiff brushes. At night, the four would rein up at some ranch house whose occupant would glance at them, then ask:

"Where you goin'?"

"Goin' to a good fight," Dick would answer for them.

The rancher's face would relax. "Good men do good fightin'," he would complete the Unionist password. "Light down, friends."

On a dark night in early spring, a Texas Mexican, who swore by Senor Lincoln, paddled his boat across the Rio Grande. He shook hands solemnly with his four passengers when they set foot on the soil of Mexico, headed for Matamoros and the Union sanctuary set up there by another Texan loyalist, Colonel Edmund J. Davis.

Three days later, the four Preeces boarded a vessel bound for New Orleans. Dick found the steamer's deck harder riding than the back of a wild bronc. He cursed a little when pious Uncle Will was out of earshot. Then the forbidden words died on his lips as he noticed the flag flying from the mast.

He counted the stars on the banner. Thirty-four. One for each state of the Union, including those eleven seceding states finally beginning to realize that divorce came hard from their common country.

"Thirty-four stars, and thirty-four states," he murmured. "Still more to come -- more'n I'll ever live to see -- after this shootin' match is over."

He turned to Uncle Will, who had come up to fetch him for a meal below.

"It's a danged good-lookin' flag," Dick drawled. "And we're gonna keep every star and every state."

RW

Bibliography

This article is written from information handed down to me by the older members of my family.